

THE HOUSE OF THE
TREES and other Poems

BY CATHERINE WILKES RAID



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THE HOUSE OF THE TREES & OTHER POEMS

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To F. B.

Many of the poems in this volume are printed here for the first time; several, however, have appeared in either the "New York Independent," the "New England Magazine," the "Youth's Companion," the "Toronto Week," or the "Travelers' Record," and to their editors thanks are due for permission to reprint them.

Contents

The House of the Trees	Page 3
The Sun on the Trees	4
Moonlight	5
Pine Needles	6
The Sound of the Axe	7
The Prayer of the Year	9
The Hay Field	10
Twilight	12
The Sky Path	13
Fall and Spring	14
The Woodside Way	15
A Rainy Day	16
When Twilight Comes	17
Leafless April	18
The Visitors	19
Autumn Days	20
Woodland Worship	21
When Days Are Long	22
Out of Doors	23
Make Room	24
The Humming Bird	25
September	26
The March Orchard	28
The Blind Man	30

To the October Wind	Page 32
A Midday in Midsummer	33
A Slow Rain	35
The Patient Earth	36
At Dawn	39
In the Crowd	41
By Fields of Grass	42
October	43
Winter	44
The Snow-Storm	45
To February	46
Rest	47
The Shy Sun	48
In April	49
Apple Blossoms	50
The Big Moon	51
The Twins	53
Autumn Fire	55
In the Grass	56
The Fields of Dark	57
Children in the City	59
Where Pleasures Grow	60
In the Heart of the Woods	61
Frost	62
The Chipmunk	63
Give Me the Poorest Weed	64
The Weeks that Walk in Green	65
Noonday of the Year	66
The Wind World	67

At the Window	Page 68
Come Back Again	69
A Rainy Morning	71
June Apples	72
Beginning and End	73
Not at Home	75
The Wind of Memory	76
Philippa	78
The Student	79
Unspoken	80
Under the King	83
The Secret	84
Limitation	85
Three Years Old	86
Sometime, I Fear	88
Joy	89
In the Dark	91
Words	92
The Wind of Death	93

The House of the Trees

The House of the Trees

OPE your doors and take me in,
Spirit of the wood ;
Wash me clean of dust and din,
Clothe me in your mood.

Take me from the noisy light
To the sunless peace,
Where at midday standeth Night,
Signing Toil's release.

All your dusky twilight stores
To my senses give ;
Take me in and lock the doors,
Show me how to live.

Lift your leafy roof for me,
Part your yielding walls,
Let me wander lingeringly
Through your scented halls.

Ope your doors and take me in,
Spirit of the wood ;
Take me — make me next of kin
To your leafy brood.

The Sun on the Trees

THE sun within the leafy woods
Is like a midday moon,
So soft upon these solitudes
Is bent the face of noon.

Loosed from the outside summer blaze
A few gold arrows stray ;
A vagrant brilliance droops or plays
Through all the dusky day.

The gray trunk feels a touch of light,
While, where dead leaves are deep,
A gleam of sunshine golden white
Lies like a soul asleep.

And just beyond dank-rooted ferns,
Where darkening hemlocks sigh
And leaves are dim, the bare road burns
Beneath a dazzling sky.

Moonlight

WHEN I see the ghost of night
Stealing through my window-pane,
Silken sleep and silver light
Struggle for my soul in vain ;
Silken sleep all balmily
Breathes upon my lids oppressed,
Till I sudden start to see
Ghostly fingers on my breast.

White and skyey visitant,
Bringing beauty such as stings
All my inner soul to pant
After undiscovered things,
Spare me this consummate pain !
Silken weavings intercreep
Round my senses once again,
I am mortal — let me sleep.

Pine Needles

HERE where the pine tree to the ground
Lets slip its fragrant load,
My footsteps fall without a sound
Upon a velvet road.

O poet pine, that turns thy gaze
Alone unto the sky,
How softly on earth's common ways
Thy sweet thoughts fall and lie !

So sweet, so deep, seared by the sun,
And smitten by the rain,
They pierce the heart of every one
With fragrance keen as pain.

Or if some pass nor heed their sweet,
Nor feel their subtle dart,
Their softness stills the noisy feet,
And stills the noisy heart.

O poet pine, thy needles high
In starry light abode,
And now for footsore passers-by
They make a velvet road.

The Sound of the Axe

WITH the sound of an axe on the light
wind's tracks
For my only company,
And a speck of sky like a human eye
Blue, bending over me,

I lie at rest on the low moss pressed,
Whose loose leaves downward drip;
As light they move as a word of love
Or a finger to the lip.

'Neath the canopies of the sunbright trees
Pierced by an Autumn ray,
To rich red flakes the old log breaks
In exquisite decay.

While in the pines where no sun shines
Perpetual morning lies.
What bed more sweet could stay her feet,
Or hold her dreaming eyes?

No sound is there in the middle air
But sudden wings that soar,

As a strange bird's cry goes drifting by —
And then I hear once more

That sound of an axe till the great tree cracks,
Then a crash comes as if all
The winds that through its bright leaves blew
Were sorrowing in its fall.

The Prayer of the Year

LEAVE me Hope when I am old,
Strip my joys from me,
Let November to the cold
Bare each leafy tree;
Chill my lover, dull my friend,
Only, while I grope
To the dark the silent end,
Leave me Hope!

Blight my bloom when I am old,
Bid my sunlight cease;
If it need be from my hold
Take the hand of Peace.
Leave no springtime memory,
But upon the slope
Of the days that are to be,
Leave me Hope!

The Hay Field

WITH slender arms outstretching in the
sun
The grass lies dead ;
The wind walks tenderly, and stirs not one
Frail, fallen head.

Of baby creepings through the April day
Where streamlets wend,
Of childlike dancing on the breeze of May,
This is the end.

No more these tiny forms are bathed in dew,
No more they reach,
To hold with leaves that shade them from
the blue
A whispered speech.

No more they part their arms, and wreathe
them close
Again to shield
Some love-full little nest — a dainty house
Hid in a field.

For them no more the splendor of the storm,
The fair delights
Of moon and star-shine, glimmering faint and
warm
On summer nights.

Their little lives they yield in summer death,
And frequently
Across the field bereaved their dying breath
Is brought to me.

Twilight

I SAW her walking in the rain,
And sweetly drew she nigh ;
And then she crossed the hills again
To bid the day good-by.

“ Good-by ! good-by !

The world is dim as sorrow ;
But close beside the morning sky
I'll say a glad Good-morrow ! ”

O dweller in the darling wood,
When near to death I lie,
Come from your leafy solitude,
And bid my soul good-by.

Good-by ! good-by !

The world is dim as sorrow ;
But close beside the morning sky
O say a glad Good-morrow !

The Sky Path

I HEAR the far moon's silver call
High in the upper wold ;
And shepherd-like it gathers all
My thoughts into its fold.

Oh happy thoughts, that wheresoe'er
They wander through the day,
Come home at eve to upper air
Along a shining way.

Though some are weary, some are torn,
And some are fain to grieve,
And some the freshness of the morn
Have kept until the eve,

And some perversely seek to roam
E'en from their shepherd bright,
Yet all are gathered safely home,
And folded for the night.

Oh happy thoughts, that with the streams
The trees and meadows share
The sky path to the gate of dreams,
In their white shepherd's care.

Fall and Spring

FROM the time the wind wakes
To the time of snowflakes,
That's the time the heart aches
Every cloudy day ;
That's the time the heart takes
Thought of all its heart-breaks,
That's the time the heart makes
Life a cloudy way.

From the time the grass creeps
To the time the wind sleeps,
That's the time the heart leaps
To the golden ray ;
That's the time that joy sweeps
Through the depths of heart-deeps,
That's the time the heart keeps
Happy holiday.

The Woodside Way

I WANDERED down the woodside way,
Where branching doors ope with the
breeze,
And saw a little child at play
Among the strong and lovely trees ;
The dead leaves rustled to her knees ;
Her hair and eyes were brown as they.

“ Oh, little child,” I softly said,
“ You come a long, long way to me ;
The trees that tower overhead
Are here in sweet reality,
But you ’re the child I used to be,
And all the leaves of May you tread.”

A Rainy Day

IT has been twilight all the day,
And as the twilight peace
On daily fetters seems to lay
The finger of release,

So, needless as to tree and flower
Seem care and fear and pain ;
Our hearts grow fresher every hour,
And brighten in the rain.

When Twilight Comes

ALL out of doors for all life's way,
The fields and the woods and the good
sunlight ;
And then in the chill of the evening gray,
A sheltered nook and the hearth-fire bright.

No hearth, no shelter attend my way !
Not late, dear life, linger not too late ;
But before the chill and before the gray,
Let the sunset gild the grave-stone date.

Leafless April

LEAFLESS April chased by light,
Chased by dark and full of laughter,
Stays a moment in her flight
Where the warmest breezes waft her,
By the meadow brook to lean,
Or where winter rye is growing,
Showing in a lovelier green
Where her wayward steps are going.

Blithesome April brown and warm,
Showing slimness through her tatters,
Chased by sun or chased by storm —
Not a whit to her it matters.
Swiftly through the violet bed,
Down to where the stream is flooding
Light she flits — and round her head
See the orchard branches budding !

The Visitors

IN the room where I was sleeping
The sun came to the floor ;
Its silent thought went leaping
To where in woods of yore
It felt the sun before.

At noon the rain was slanting
In gray lines from the west ;
A hurried child all panting
It pattered to my nest,
And smiled when sun-caressed.

At eve the wind was flying
Bird-like from bed to chair,
Of brown leaves sere and dying
It brought enough to spare,
And dropped them here and there.

At night-time without warning,
I felt almost to pain
The soul of the sun in the morning,
And the soul of the wind and rain
In my sleeping-room remain.

Autumn Days

AUTUMN days are sun crowned,
Full of laughing breath ;
Light their leafy feet are dancing
Down the way to death.

Scarlet-shrouded to the grave
I watch them gayly go ;
So may I as blithely die
Before November snow.

Woodland Worship

HERE 'mid these leafy walls
Are sylvan halls,
And all the Sabbaths of the year
Are gathered here.

Upon their raptured mood
My steps intrude,
Then wait — as some freed soul might wait
At heaven's gate.

Nowhere on earth — nowhere
On sea or air,
Do I as easily escape
This earthly shape,

As here upon the white
And dizzy height
Of utmost worship, where it seems
Too still for dreams.

When Days Are Long

WHEN twilight late delayeth,
And morning wakes in song,
And fields are full of daisies,
I know the days are long ;
When Toil is stretched at nooning,
Where leafy pleasures throng,
When nights o'errun in music,
I know the days are long.

When suns afoot are marching,
And rains are quick and strong,
And streams speak in a whisper,
I know the days are long.
When hills are clad in velvet,
And winds can do no wrong,
And woods are deep and dusky,
I know the days are long.

Out of Doors

IN the urgent solitudes
Lies the spur to larger moods ;
In the friendship of the trees
Dwell all sweet serenities.

Make Room

ROOM for the children out of doors,
For heads of gold or gloom ;
For raspberry lips and rose-leaf cheeks and
palms,
Make room — make room !

Room for the springtime out of doors,
For buds in green or bloom ;
For every brown bare-handed country weed
Make room — make room !

Room for earth's sweetest out of doors,
And for its worst a tomb ;
For housed-up griefs and fears, and scorns,
and sighs,
No room — no room !

The Humming Bird

A GAINST my window-pane
He plunges at a mass
Of buds — and strikes in vain
The intervening glass.

O sprite of wings and fire
Outstretching eagerly,
My soul with like desire
To probe thy mystery,

Comes close as breast to bloom,
As bud to hot heart-beat,
And gains no inner room,
And drains no hidden sweet.

September

BUT yesterday all faint for breath,
The Summer laid her down to die ;
And now her frail ghost wandereth
In every breeze that loiters by.
Her wilted prisoners look up,
As wondering who hath broke their chain,
Too deep they drank of summer's cup,
They have no strength to rise again.

How swift the trees, their mistress gone,
Enrobe themselves for revelry !
Ungovernable winds upon
The wold are dancing merrily.
With crimson fruits and bursting nuts,
And whirling leaves and flushing streams,
The spirit of September cuts
Adrift from August's languid dreams.

A little while the revellers
Shall flame and flaunt and have their day,
And then will come the messengers
Who travel on a cloudy way.

And after them a form of light,
A sense of iron in the air,
Upon the pulse a touch of might
And winter's legions everywhere.

The March Orchard

UNLEAVED, undrooping, still, they stand,
This stanch and patient pilgrim band ;
October robbed them of their fruit,
November stripped them to the root,
The winter smote their helplessness
With furious ire and stormy stress,
And now they seem almost to stand
In sight of Summer's Promised Land.

Yet seen through frosty window-panes,
When bared and bound in wintry chains,
Their lightsome spirits seemed to play
With February as with May.
The snow that turned the skies afrown
Enwrap them in the softest down,
And rains that dulled the landscape o'er
But left them livelier than before.

But now this June-like day of March
With patient strength their branches arch,
Not as unmindful of the breeze
That makes midsummer melodies,

But knowing Spring a fickle maid,
And that rough days must dawn and fade
Before, all blossoming bright, they stand
In sight of Summer's Promised Land.

The Blind Man

THE blind man at his window bars
Stands in the morning dewy dim ;
The lily-footed dawn, the stars
That wait for it, are naught to him.

And naught to his unseeing eyes
The brownness of a sunny plain,
Where worn and drowsy August lies,
And wakens but to sleep again.

And naught to him a greening slope,
That yearns up to the heights above,
And naught the leaves of May, that ope
As softly as the eyes of love.

And naught to him the branching aisles,
Athrong with woodland worshippers,
And naught the fields where summer smiles
Among her sunburned laborers.

The way a trailing streamlet goes,
The barefoot grasses on its brim,
The dew a flower cup o'erflows
With silent joy, are hid from him.

To him no breath of nature calls ;
Upon his desk his work is laid ;
He looks up at the dingy walls,
And listens to the voice of Trade.

To the October Wind

OLD playmate, showering the way
With thick leaf storms in red and gold,
I 'm only six years old to-day,
 You 've made me feel but six years old.
In yellow gown and scarlet hood
 I whirled, a leaf among the rest,
Or lay within the thinning wood,
 And played that you were Red-of-breast.

Old comrade, lift me up again ;
 Your arms are strong, your feet are swift,
And bear me lightly down the lane
 Through all the leaves that drift and drift,
And out into the twilight wood,
 And lay me softly down to rest,
And cover me just as you would
 If you were really Red-of-breast.

A Midday in Midsummer

THE sky's great curtains downward steal,
The earth's fair company
Of trees and streams and meadows feel
A sense of privacy.

Upon the vast expanse of heat
Light-footed breezes pace ;
To waves of gold they tread the wheat,
They lift the sunflower's face.

The cruel sun is blotted out,
The west is black with rain,
The drooping leaves in mingled doubt
And hope look up again.

The weeds and grass on tiptoe stand,
A strange exultant thrill
Prepares the dazed uncertain land
For the wild tempest's will.

The wind grows big and breathes aloud
As it runs hurrying past ;
At one sharp blow the thunder-cloud
Lets loose the furious blast.

The earth is beaten, drenched and drowned,
The elements go mad ;
Swift streams of joy flow o'er the ground,
And all the leaves are glad.

Then comes a momentary lull,
The darkest clouds are furled,
And lo, new washed and beautiful
And breathless gleams the world.

A Slow Rain

ADROWSY rain is stealing
In slowness without stop;
The sun-dried earth is feeling
Its coolness, drop by drop.

The clouds are slowly wasting
Their too long garnered store,
Each thirsty clod is tasting
One drop — and then one more.

Oh, ravishing as slumber
To wearied limbs and eyes,
And countless as the number
Of stars in wintry skies,

And sweet as the caresses
By baby fingers made,
These delicate rain kisses
On leaf and flower and blade.

The Patient Earth

I

THE patient earth that loves the grass,
The flocks and herds that o'er it pass,
That guards the smallest summer nest
Within her scented bosom pressed,
And gives to beetle, moth, and bee
A lavish hospitality,
Still waits through weary years to bind
The hearts of suffering human kind.

II

How far we roamed away from her,
The tender mother of us all !
Yet 'mid the city's noises stir
The sound of birds that call and call,
Wind melodies that rise and fall
Along the perfumed woodland wall
We looked upon with childhood's eyes ;
The ugly streets are all a blur,
And in our hearts are homesick cries.

III

The loving earth that roots the trees
So closely to her inmost heart,
Has rooted us as well as these,
Not long from her we live apart ;
We draw upon a lengthening string,
For months perhaps, perhaps for years,
And plume ourselves that we are free,
And then — we hear a robin sing
Where starving grass shows stunted spears,
Or haycart moving fragrantly
Where creaking tavern sign-boards swing ;
Then closer, tighter draws the chain,
The man, too old and worn for tears,
Goes back to be a child again.

IV

The greed that took us prisoner
First led our steps away from her ;
For lust of gold we gave up life,
And sank heart-deep in worldly strife.
And when Success — beloved name —
At last with faltering footsteps came,
The city's rough, harsh imps of sound
And Competition's crush and cheat
Were in her wreath securely bound ;

Her fruits still savored of the street,
Its choking dust, its wearied feet,
Her poorest like her richest prize
Was rotted o'er with envious eyes,
And sickened with the human heat
Of hands that strove to clutch it fast,
And struggling gave it up at last.
Not so where nature summer-crowned
Makes fields and woods a pleasure-ground,
Sky-blest, wind-kissed, and circled round
With waters lapsing cool and sweet.

V

O Earth, sweet Mother, take us back !
With woodland strength and orchard joy,
And river peace without alloy,
Flood us who on the city's track
Have followed stifling sordid years,
Cleanse us with dew and meadow rain,
Till life's horizon lights and clears,
And nature claims us once again.

At Dawn

A SPIRIT through
My window came when earth was soft
with dew,
Close at the tender edge of dawn when all
The spring was new,

And bore me back
Along her rose-and-starry tinted track,
And showed me how the full-winged day
emerged
From out the black.

She knew the speech
Of all the deep-pink blossoms of the peach,
Told in my ear the meanings of the trees,
The thoughts of each ;

Explained to me
The language of the bird and frog and bee,
The messages the streams and rivers take
Unto the sea.

Alas! Alas!
I have forgot. The dream did from me pass.
I know not e'en the meaning dear and sweet
Of common grass.

And now when I
Roam this strange earth beneath a stranger
sky,
Soft syllables of that forgotten speech
Faint as a sigh,

Come back again,
With sweet solicitings that urge like pain,
And brood like love — as full of light and dark
As April rain.

In the Crowd

HERE in the crowded city's busy street,
Swayed by the eager, jostling, hasting
throng,

Where Traffic's voice grows harsher and
more strong,

I see within the stream of hurrying feet

A company of trees in their retreat,

Dew-bathed, dream-wrapped, and with a
thrush's song

Emparadising all the place, along

Whose paths I hear the pulse of Beauty beat.

'T was yesterday I walked beneath the trees,

To-day I tread the city's stony ways ;

And still the spell that o'er my spirit
came

Turns harshest sounds to shy bird ecstasies,

Pours scent of pine through murky chimney
haze,

And gives each careworn face a woodland
frame.

By Fields of Grass

BY fields of grass and woodland silences
The city's tumult is encamped around ;
The jingling, clanging, shrieking fiends of
sound

Expire within the wide world-circling breeze.
The soul amid a multitude of trees,
Or grass enveloped on the fragrant ground,
Is lifted to its utmost starry round,
And listens to celestial harmonies.

From this unspeakably divine rebirth,
Its sordid life returning shows through
rifts

How purely spreads the sky, how musical
The streams and breezes flow across the
earth,
How light the tree its fruity load uplifts,
How easily the weed is beautiful.

October

A GAINST the winter's heav'n of white
the blood

Of earth runs very quick and hot to-day ;
A storm of fiery leaves are out at play
Around the lingering sunset of the wood.
Where rows of blackberries unnoticed stood,
Run streams of ruddy color wildly gay ;
The golden lane half dreaming picks its
way
Through 'whelming vines, as through a
gleaming flood.

O warm, outspoken earth, a little space
Against thy beating heart my heart shall
beat,
A little while they twain shall bleed and
burn,
And then the cold touch and the gray, gray
face,
The frozen pulse, the drifted winding-sheet,
And speechlessness, and the chill burial
urn.

Winter

NOW that the earth has hid her lovely
brood

Of green things in her breast safe out of
sight,

And all the trees have stripped them for
the fight,

The winter comes with wild winds singing
rude

Hoarse battle songs — so furious in feud

That nothing lives that has not felt their
bite.

They sound a trumpet in the dead of night
That makes more solitary solitude.

Against the forest doors how fierce they beat!

Against the porch, against the school-
bound boy

With crimson cheek bent to his shaggy
coat.

The earth is pale but steadfast, hearing
sweet

But far — how far away! the stream of joy

Outpouring from a bluebird's tender
throat.

The Snow-Storm

THE great, soft, downy snow-storm like a
cloak

Descends to wrap the lean world head to
feet ;

It gives the dead another winding-sheet,
It buries all the roofs until the smoke
Seems like a soul that from its clay has
broke ;

It broods moon-like upon the Autumn
wheat,

And visits all the trees in their retreat,
To hood and mantle that poor shiv'ring folk.

With wintry bloom it fills the harshest
grooves

In jagged pine stump fences. Every sound
It hushes to the footstep of a nun.
Sweet Charity! that brightens where it
moves,

Inducing darkest bits of churlish ground
To give a radiant answer to the sun.

To February

O MASTER-BUILDER, blustering as you
go

About your giant work, transforming all
The empty woods into a glittering hall,
And making lilac lanes and footpaths grow
As hard as iron under stubborn snow,
Though every fence stand forth a marble
wall,
And windy hollows drift to arches tall,
There comes a might that shall your might
o'erthrow.

Build high your white and dazzling palaces,
Strengthen your bridges, fortify your tow-
ers,
Storm with a loud and a portentous lip;
And April with a fragmentary breeze,
And half a score of gentle, golden hours,
Shall leave no trace of your stern work-
manship.

Rest

FROM the depths of dreams I am drawn
To the inner depth of a pine,
That near my window keeps the dawn —
A dawn that is wholly mine.
Dream-rest and pine-rest,
And a cool, gray path between —
A cool, gray path from the night's breast
To the heart of the living green.

To the depths of dreams I go
On the sounds of falling rain,
That in the night-time gently flow
In a stream on my window-pane.
Stream-rest and dream-rest,
And a cool, dark path between —
A cool, dark path from the rain's breast
To the heart of the soft unseen.

The Shy Sun

THE sun went with me to the wood,
And lingered at the door ;
One glance he gave from where he stood,
But dared not venture more,

Nor knew that in the heart of her
Who felt his presence nigh,
His love was all the lovelier
Because his look was shy.

In April

WHEN Spring unbound comes o'er us
like a flood,
My spirit slips its bars,
And thrills to see the trees break into bud
As skies break into stars ;

And joys that earth is green with eager grass,
The heavens gray with rain,
And quickens when the spirit breezes pass,
And turn and pass again ;

And dreams upon frog melodies at night,
Bird ecstasies at dawn,
And wakes to find sweet April at her height
And May still beck'ning on ;

And feels its sordid work, its empty play,
Its failures and its stains
Dissolved in blossom dew, and washed away
In delicate spring rains.

Apple Blossoms

A MID the young year's breathing hopes,
When eager grasses wrap the earth,
I see on greening orchard slopes
The blossoms trembling into birth.
They open wide their rosy palms
To feel the hesitating rain,
Or beg a longed-for golden alms
From skies that deep in clouds have lain.

They mingle with the bluebird's songs,
And with the warm wind's reverie ;
To sward and stream their snow belongs,
To neighboring pines in flocks they flee.
O doubly crowned, with breathing hopes
The branches bending down to earth,
That feel on greening orchard slopes
Their blossoms trembling into birth.

The Big Moon

THE big moon came to the edge of the sky,
And pierced me with its dart;
I strove to put its brightness by
Before it burned my heart.

I wrapped the windows thick and well,
I closely barred the door,
The light of my penny candles fell
On low-built wall and floor.

The little room and the little light
Began to comfort me;
But I heard — I heard the golden night
Call like a sounding sea.

I knew the moon swam in the sky,
And the earth swam in the moon;
I went outside in the grass to lie,
To yield to the deadly swoon.

My soul was filled with white moon rain
Till it ran o'er and o'er,
My soul was thrilled with bright moon pain
Till it could bear no more;

I stole back through the curtained gloom
Up stairs unlit and steep,
And in a low-ceiled darkened room
My hurt was healed with sleep.

The Twins

I

THE old man and his apple-tree
Are verging close on eighty-three ;
'T was planted there when he was two,
And almost side by side they grew.
How strong and straight they were at eight,
One leafy, one with curly pate.
How fine at twenty, how alive
And prosperous at twenty-five.
What health and grace in every limb,
Was said of it — was said of him.

II

Then when he blushed, a marriage groom,
The tree outvied the bride in bloom ;
And in the after years there played
Within its ample sweep of shade
A little child, with cheeks as red
As had the apples overhead.
Her father called the tree his twin,
And surely it was next of kin.

III

The best of life came to the twain,
The beauty of the stars, the rain,
Soft stepping, and the liquid notes
That overflow from feathered throats.
Unto the soul that selfish strives
Was borne the fragrance of their lives,
And anxious folk with brow down bent
Bathed in their dewy cool content.
They held their heads up in the storm,
And gloried when the winds were warm ;
Their shadows lay but at their feet,
And all of life above was sweet.

IV

And now that they are eighty-three
They're almost as they used to be.
The blossoms are as pink and white,
The old man's heart as pure and light.
The apples — fragrant balls of flame —
Are looking, tasting, just the same.
And just the same his uttered thought
Of mirth and wisdom quaintly wrought.
Through all their years they kept their truth,
Their strength, and that sweet look of youth.

Autumn Fire

THE fires of Autumn are burning high ;
Bright the trees in the woods are blazing —

A wall of flame from the brilliant sky
Down to the fields where the cattle are grazing.

O the warm, warm end of the year !
Even the shrubs their red hearts render ;
All the bushes are bright with cheer
And the tamest vine has a touch of splendor.

The fires of Autumn are burning low ;
Blow, ye winds, and cease not blowing !
Blow the flames to a ruddier show,
Heap the coals to a hotter glowing.
Ah, the chill, chill end of the year !
Naught is left but a few leaf flashes ;
White is the death stone, white and drear,
Over a desolate world of ashes.

In the Grass

FACE downward on the grass in reverie,
I found how cool and sweet
Are the green glooms that often thoughtlessly
I tread beneath my feet.

In this strange mimic wood where grasses
lean —
Elf trees untouched of bark —
I heard the hum of insects, saw the sheen
Of sunlight framing dark,

And felt with thoughts I cannot understand,
And know not how to speak,
A daisy reaching up its little hand
To lay it on my cheek.

The Fields of Dark

THE wreathing vine within the porch
Is in the heart of me,
The roses that the noondays scorch
Shall burn in memory ;
Alone at night I quench the light,
And without star or spark
The grass and trees press to my knees,
And flowers throng the dark.

The leaves that loose their hold at noon
Drop on my face like rain,
And in the watches of the moon
I feel them fall again.
By day I stray how far away
To stream and wood and steep,
But on my track they all come back
To haunt the vale of sleep.

The fields of light are clover-brimmed,
Or grassed or daisy-starred,
The fields of dark are softly dimmed,
And safely twilight-barred ;

But in the gloom that fills my room
I cannot fail to mark
The grass and trees about my knees,
The flowers in the dark.

Children in the City

THOUSANDS of childish ears, rough
chidden,
Never a sweet bird-note have heard,
Deep in the leafy woodland hidden
Dies, unlistened to, many a bird.
For small soiled hands in the sordid city
Blossoms open and die unbreathed ;
For feet unwashed by the tears of pity
Streams around meadows of green are
wreathed.

Warm, unrevelled in, still they wander,
Summer breezes out in the fields ;
Scarcely noticed, the green months squander
All the wealth that the summer yields.
Ah, the pain of it ! Ah, the pity !
Opulent stretch the country skies
Over solitudes, while in the city
Starving for beauty are childish eyes.

Where Pleasures Grow

WHERE pleasures grow as thick as
grass,
And joys of silence, soft, profound,
Are sweeter e'en than joys of sound,
The long, long days of summer pass.

I see them sitting in the sun,
Or moving river-like between
The climbing and down-bending green,
I watch them vanish one by one,

And strive to clasp them as they flee,
But only hold their shadows fast —
The summer shadows that they cast
Upon the path of memory.

In the Heart of the Woods

I LOST my heart in the heart of the woods ;
It stayed there through the day,
It stayed there through the solitudes
Of a night with no moon ray.

Through the day so dusty, worn and sere
My heart was cool and free,
Through the wild night, tempest-tossed and
drear,
My heart slept peacefully.

I found my heart in the heart of the woods,
I looked on it and smiled ;
And over it still the woodland broods,
As a mother over her child.

Frost

WHEN the sun is growing weaker,
And his look is meek and meeker,
Comes the frost — the pale betrayer —
Light of foot, a stealthy slayer.

In the night abroad he stealeth,
For each trembling leaf he feeleth ;
Something softened by its pleading,
Kills it not but leaves it bleeding.

The Chipmunk

TO-DAY the green hill was at strife
With me; it robbed my feet of life.
The wind that loudly speaks his mind,
Said in my presence nothing kind.
The sky's clear face was from me turned,
Behind a cloud his great fire burned.

An exile in his native cot,
Who finds his very name forgot,
Was I this afternoon, until
At the wood's edge behind the hill,
A chipmunk flashed, and leapt a limb,
And took my heart away with him.

Give Me the Poorest Weed

GIVE me the poorest weed
To satisfy my spirit's need.
The brownest blade of grass
Will know and greet me when I pass.

Of their own feeling wrought,
They live like simple, vital thought ;
The mind could not invent
A better thing than Nature meant.

The Weeks that Walk in Green

THE weeks that walk in green
Came to my willow lane,
And wrapt me in their leafy screen
Against the sun and rain.

Then far and far we went
By stream and wood and steep,
Until, all love-worn and joy-spent,
I yielded me to sleep.

And they — they died unseen ;
Their ghosts are haunting me —
The gentle ghosts that walk in green
Through vales of memory.

Noonday of the Year

THE streams that chattered in the cold
Are sleeping in the sun ;
The winds of March were overbold
Until their race was run.

O mad with haste the morning went,
But now love-warm and deep,
The fields, their first ambition spent,
Lie in their noonday sleep.

The Wind World

ALONE within the wind I lie,
And reck not how the seasons go ;
The winter struggling through its snow,
The light-winged summer flitting by.

I am not of the cloud nor mold,
I move between the stars and flowers,
I know the tingling touch of hours
When all the storms of night unfold.

Within the wind world drifting free
I hear naught of earth's murmurings,
Naught but the sound of songs and wings
Among the tree-tops comes to me.

At night earth stars flash out below,
And heaven stars shine out above ;
I look down on the lights of love,
And feel the higher love-lights glow.

At the Window

HOW thick about the window of my life
Buzz insect-like the tribe of petty frets :
Small cares, small thoughts, small trials, and
 small strife,
Small loves and hates, small hopes and
 small regrets.

If 'mid this swarm of smallnesses remain
 A single undimmed spot, with wondering
 eye
I note before my freckled window-pane
 The outstretched splendor of the earth
 and sky.

Come Back Again

CHILD-THOUGHTS, child-thoughts,
come back again !

Faint, fitful, as you used to be ;
The dusty chambers of my brain
Have need of your fair company,
As when my child-head reached the height
Of the wild rose-bush at the door,
And all of heaven and its delight
Bloomed in the flow'rs the old bush bore.

Come back, sweet long-departed year,
When, sitting in a hollow oak,
I heard the sheep bells far and clear,
I heard a voice that silent spoke,
And felt in both a vague appeal,
And both were mingled in my dreams
With leaves that viewless breezes feel,
And skies clear mirrored in the streams.

Child-heart, child-thoughts, come back again !
Bring back the tall grass at my cheek,
The grief more swift than summer rain,
The joy that knew no words to speak.

The buttercup's uplifted gold
That strives to reach my hands in vain,
The love that never could grow cold —
Child-heart, child-thoughts, come back
again !

A Rainy Morning

THE low sky, and the warm, wet wind,
And the tender light on the eyes ;
A day like a soul that has never sinned,
New dropped from Paradise.

And 't is oh, for a long walk in the rain,
By the side of the warm, wet breeze,
With the thoughts washed clean of dust and
stain
As the leaves on the shining trees.

June Apples

GREEN apple branches full of green apples
All around me unfurled,
Here where the shade and the sunlight
dapples
A grass-green, apple-green world.

Little green children stirred with the heaving
Of the warm breast of the air,
When your old nurse, the wind, is grieving
Comfortlessly you fare.

But now an old-time song she is crooning,
Nestle your heads again,
While I dream on through the golden noon-
ing,
Or look for the first red stain

On some round cheek that the sunshine
dapples,
Near me where I lie curled
Under green trees athrong with green apples,
In a grass-green, apple-green world.

Beginning and End

ONCE it was in my life's beginning,
Roses were tall in their summer beds,
Dandelions within my fingers
Thrust their confident golden heads ;
Wading waist-deep 'mid the daisies,
Feeling the grasses about me climb —
Thus it was in my life's beginning ;
What have you done to me, Father Time?

So shall it be when life has ended :
Roses shall bloom above my head,
Dandelions will know I am lying
Hidden in grass from foot to head.
Hidden in grass and hidden in daisies,
Over my breast I shall feel them climb,
Thus it will be when life has ended ;
This will you do to me, Father Time.

Not at Home

THE Weariness of Idleness,
She waited all the day
In the parlor of her neighbor,
The Weariness of Labor —
A visit she had long meant to pay.

But not until the evening
Did her hostess come in sight ;
Then the Weariness of Labor
Explained unto her neighbor
That she lived but a brief hour at night.

The Wind of Memory

RED curtains shut the storm from sight,
The inner rooms are live with light ;
The fireside faces all aglow
See not the pale ghost in the snow,
The pale ghost at the window pressed,
With the wind moaning in her breast.

She sees the face she hurt with scorn,
The other face where joy, new born,
Died out at her cheap mockery ;
The eyes she filled, how bitterly !
The head that drooped beneath her jest —
The wind is moaning in her breast.

Invisible, unfelt, unknown,
She lingers trembling. She alone
Notes tenderly her vacant place,
And sees in it her vanished face ;
She only — of this happy nest !
The wind is moaning in her breast.

Star-like the happy windows glow,
Framed in with mile on mile of snow ;
And from their light a thing of death,

Of grief and memory vanisheth,
Her sin not deep but unredressed,
And the wind moaning in her breast.

Philippa

A GENEROUS gentleness that flowed,
Stream-like, beside a dusty road ;
Gave laborers shade, and prisoners sun,
And easeful joy to every one ;
With liquid melodies for such
As worked or wearied overmuch,
And ministrations cool and sweet
For fevered hands and aching feet.

So delicately fair she moved —
That stream-like girl, of all beloved.
Along her path no grief nor care
But lulled and lightened unaware.
She bore the sky within her breast,
And child-like winds her soul caressed,
Until her spring of life was dried,
And with a smile Philippa died.

The Student

THE student sits within his room,
So small and worn and white ;
His lamp flames out remote and strange
Through all the hours of night.

And all day long within his face,
So small and worn and white,
His eyes flame out — those lamp-like eyes,
So weirdly, strangely bright.

Unspoken

MY lover comes down the long leafy street
Through tenderly falling rain ;
His footsteps near our portal veer,
Go past — then turn again.

O can it be he is knocking below,
Or here at my door above ?
So gentle and small it sounds in the hall,
So loud in the ear of love.

But never a word of love has he said,
And never a word crave I,
For why should one long for the daylight
strong
When the dawn is in the sky ?

O a dewy rose-garden is the house,
A garden shut from the sun ;
The breath of it sweet floats up, as my feet
Float down to my waiting one.

But if ever a word of love thinks he,
It falls from his heart still-born ;

Who bends to the rose does not haste to
close
His hand around bud and thorn.

The beautiful soul that is in him turns
His beautiful face a gleam ;
My own soul flies to feast in his eyes,
Where the silent love-words teem.

Our talk is of books, and of thoughts and
moods,
Of the wild flowers in the rain ;
And he leans his cheek, when we do not
speak,
On his chair where my hand had lain.

Yet never a word of love does he say,
And never a word crave I ;
For the faint green May would wither
away
At the quick touch of July.

And at last — at last we look our last,
And the dim day grows more dim ;
But his eyes still shine in these eyes of
mine,
And my soul goes forth with him.

For though not a word of love does he say,
Still never a word crave I ;
For the words of earth are of little worth
When a song drops out of the sky.

Under the King

LOVE with the deep eyes and soft hair,
Love with the lily throat and hands,
Is done to death, and free as air
Am I of all my King's commands.

How shall I celebrate my joy?
Or dance with feet that once were fleet
In his adorable employ?
Or laugh with lips that felt his sweet?

How can I at his lifeless face
Aim any sharp or bitter jest,
Since roguish destiny did place
That tender target in my breast?

Nay, let me be sincere and strong;
I cannot rid me of my chains,
I cannot to myself belong,
My King is dead — his soul still reigns.

The Secret

SOME chance moment life confesses
That her insect nothingnesses
Carry honey with their stings,
But 'tis only to their kings —
Those who know how best to use them,
Those who know how to refuse them —
That the secret is made free,
And souls are loosed from tyranny.

Limitation

BEYOND the far horizon's farthest bound
A farther boundary lies ;
No spirit wing can reach the utmost round,
No spirit eyes.

The soul has limitations such as space,
Such as eternity ;
The farthest star to which thou setst thy face
Belongs to thee.

Three Years Old

WHAT is it like, I wonder, to roam
Down through the tall grass hidden
quite?

To feel very far away from home
When the dear house is out of sight?

To want to play with the broken moon
In the star garden of the skies?

To sleep through twilight eves of June
Beneath the sound of lullabies?

To hold up hurts for all to see,
Sob at imaginary harms,
To clasp in welcome a father's knee,
And fit so well to a mother's arms?

To have life bounded by one dull road,
A wood and a pond, and to feel no lack,
To gaze with pleasure upon a toad,
And caress a mud-turtle's horny back?

To follow the robin's cheerful hop
With all the salt small hands can hold,

And plead in vain for it to stop —
What is it like to be three years old ?

Ah, once I knew, but 't was long ago ;
I try to recall it in vain — in vain !
And now I know I shall never know
What it is to be a child again.

Sometime, I Fear

SOMETIME, I fear, but God alone knows
when,

Mine eyes shall gaze on your unseeing eyes,
On your unheeding ears shall fall my cries,
Your clasp shall cease, your soul go from my
ken,

Your great heart be a fire burned out. — Ah,
then,

What shall remain for me beneath the skies
Of glad, or good, or beautiful, or wise,
That can relume and thrill my life again?

This shall remain, a love that cannot fail,
A life that joys in your great joy, yet grieves
In memory of sweet days fled too soon.
Sadness divine! as when November pale
Sits broken-hearted 'mong her withered
leaves,
And feels the wind about her warm as
June.

Joy

WHEN airy joy doth hail me
I follow on behind,
And lest my feet should fail me
I follow on the wind ;
I hear her lightsome laughter
Go floating past the door,
And swift I follow after
As she flies on before.

When I am faint and falling,
And lose her skyey wings,
I hear her liquid calling,
And feel the charm she flings
On all the earth and o'er me,
Then eagerly I rise,
And see her skirts before me
Go glittering up the skies.

The best of life would daunt me
Ungirdled by her grace,
And foreign demons haunt me
Whene'er she hides her face.

Up roughest steeps with laughter
My airy joy doth soar,
As wind-like I come after,
And she flies on before.

In the Dark

ALL in the dark he crossed the border !
All in the dark, for the lamp of faith
Had never been used, and was not in order —
So all in the dark he encountered Death.

Words

I LIKE those words that carry in their
veins

The blood of lions. "Liberty" is one,
And "Justice," and the heart leaps to the
sun

When the thrilled note of "Courage! Cour-
age!" rains

Upon the sorely stricken will. No pains
Survive when "Life" and "Light," twin
glories, run

From the quick page to some poor soul
undone,

And beggar by their glow all other gains.

How splendidly does "Morning" flood our
night!

How the word "Ocean" drowns our in-
sect cares,

And drives a strong wind through our
housed-up grief.

While "Honor" lifts us to the mountain
height;

And "Loyalty" the heaviest burden bears
As lightly as a tree a crimson leaf.

The Wind of Death

THE wind of death that softly blows
The last warm petal from the rose,
The last dry leaf from off the tree,
To-night has come to breathe on me.

There was a time I learned to hate
As weaker mortals learn to love;
The passion held me fixed as fate,
Burned in my veins early and late —
But now a wind falls from above —

The wind of death, that silently
Enshroudeth friend and enemy.

There was a time my soul was thrilled
By keen ambition's whip and spur;
My master forced me where he willed,
And with his power my life was filled,
But now the old-time pulses stir

How faintly in the wind of death!
That bloweth lightly as a breath.

And once, but once, at Love's dear feet
I yielded strength and life and heart;
His look turned bitter into sweet,
His smile made all the world complete —
The wind blows loves like leaves apart —

The wind of death, that tenderly
Is blowing 'twixt my love and me.

O wind of death, that darkly blows
Each separate ship of human woes
Far out on a mysterious sea,
I turn, I turn my face to thee.

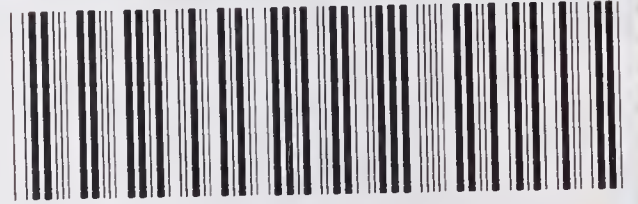
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